

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A cryptographic device comprising:
a cryptographic module and a communications module coupled thereto;

said cryptographic module comprising a user network interface and a cryptographic processor coupled thereto;

said communications module comprising a network communications interface coupled to said cryptographic processor;

said cryptographic processor communicating with said user network interface using a predetermined protocol, and said cryptographic processor communicating with said network communications interface using the predetermined protocol.

2. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said user network interface and said network communications interface both comprise Local Area Network (LAN) interfaces; and said predetermined protocol comprises Media Independent Interface (MII).

3. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said cryptographic processor comprises:

a host network processor communicating with said user network interface using the predetermined protocol; and

a cryptography circuit communicating with said host network processor using the predetermined protocol.

4. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said cryptographic processor further comprises:

an encrypted data buffer circuit coupled between said user network interface and said cryptography circuit; and

an unencrypted data buffer circuit coupled between said cryptography circuit and said network communications interface.

5. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein communications to and from said encrypted data buffer and said unencrypted data buffer use the predetermined protocol.

6. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 and wherein said cryptographic module and said communications module both operate using at least one unique external media access control (MAC) address, and at least one fixed internal MAC address.

7. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said communications module is removably coupled to said cryptographic module; and wherein said communications module comprises a predetermined one from among a plurality of interchangeable communications modules each for communicating over a different communications media.

8. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said network communications interface comprises a wireless LAN (WLAN) communication circuit.

9. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said network communications interface comprises a wireline communication circuit.

10. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said network communications interface comprises a fiber optic communication circuit.

11. The cryptographic device of Claim 1 wherein said user network interface comprises an Ethernet interface.

12. A cryptographic device comprising:
a cryptographic module and a communications module coupled thereto;

said cryptographic module comprising a user Local Area Network (LAN) interface and a cryptographic processor coupled thereto;

said communications module comprising a network LAN interface coupled to said cryptographic processor;

said cryptographic processor communicating with said user network interface using a Media Independent Interface (MII), and said cryptographic processor communicating with said network LAN interface using the MII;

said cryptographic module and said communications module both operating using at least one unique external media access control (MAC) address, and at least one fixed internal MAC address.

13. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein said cryptographic processor comprises:

a host network processor communicating with said user LAN interface using the predetermined protocol; and

a cryptography circuit communicating with said host network processor using the predetermined protocol.

14. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein said cryptographic processor further comprises:

an encrypted data buffer circuit coupled between said user LAN interface and said cryptography circuit; and

an unencrypted data buffer circuit coupled between said cryptography circuit and said network communications interface.

15. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein communications to and from said encrypted data buffer and said unencrypted data buffer use MII.

16. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein said communications module is removably coupled to said cryptographic module; and wherein said communications module comprises a predetermined one from among a plurality of interchangeable communications modules each for communicating over a different communications media.

17. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein said network LAN interface comprises a wireless LAN (WLAN) communication circuit.

18. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein said network LAN interface comprises a wireline LAN communication circuit.

19. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein said network LAN interface comprises a fiber optic LAN communication circuit.

20. The cryptographic device of Claim 12 wherein said user LAN interface comprises an Ethernet interface.

21. A communications method comprising:
coupling a cryptographic module to a network device, the cryptographic module comprising a user network interface and a cryptographic processor coupled thereto;
providing a communications module comprising a network communications interface coupled to the cryptographic processor;
using the cryptographic processor to communicate with the user network interface and the network communications interface using a predetermined protocol; and
using the network communications interface to communicate with a network.

22. The method of Claim 21 wherein the user network interface and the network communications interface both comprise LAN interfaces; and wherein the predetermined protocol comprises Media Independent Interface (MII).

23. The method of Claim 21 wherein the cryptographic processor comprises:
a host network processor communicating with the user network interface using the predetermined protocol;

a cryptography circuit communicating with the host network processor using the predetermined protocol;

an encrypted data buffer circuit coupled between the user network interface and the cryptography circuit; and

an unencrypted data buffer circuit coupled between the cryptography circuit and the network communications interface.

24. The method of Claim 23 further comprising using the predetermined protocol for communications to and from the encrypted data buffer and the unencrypted data buffer.

25. The method of Claim 21 wherein the cryptographic module and the communications module both operate using at least one unique external media access control (MAC) address, and at least one fixed internal MAC address.

26. The method of Claim 21 wherein coupling the communications module to the cryptographic processor comprises removably coupling the communications module to the cryptographic module; and wherein the communications module comprises a predetermined one from among a plurality of interchangeable communications modules each for communicating over a different communications media.

27. The method of Claim 21 wherein the network communications interface comprises at least one of a wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) communication circuit, a

wireline communication circuit, and a fiber optic communication circuit.

28. A communications system comprising:

a plurality of network devices coupled together to define a network, and a cryptographic device coupled to at least one of said network devices;

said cryptographic device comprising a cryptographic module coupled to said at least one network device, and a communications module coupled to said cryptographic module;

said cryptographic module comprising a user network interface and a cryptographic processor coupled thereto;

said communications module comprising a network communications interface coupled to said cryptographic processor;

said cryptographic processor communicating with said user network interface using a predetermined protocol, and said cryptographic processor communicating with said network communications interface using the predetermined protocol.

29. The communications system of Claim 28 wherein said user network interface and said network communications interface both comprise Local Area Network (LAN) interfaces; and wherein said predetermined protocol comprises Media Independent Interface (MII).

30. The communications system of Claim 28 wherein said cryptographic processor comprises:

a host network processor communicating with said user network interface using the predetermined protocol; and
a cryptography circuit communicating with said host network processor using the predetermined protocol.

31. The communications system of Claim 28 wherein said cryptographic processor further comprises:

an encrypted data buffer circuit coupled between said user network interface and said cryptography circuit;
and

an unencrypted data buffer circuit coupled between said cryptography circuit and said network communications interface.

32. The communications system of Claim 28 wherein communications to and from said encrypted data buffer and said unencrypted data buffer use the predetermined protocol.

33. The communications system of Claim 28 and wherein said cryptographic module and said communications module both operate using at least one unique external media access control (MAC) address, and at least one fixed internal MAC address.

34. The communications system of Claim 28 wherein said communications module is removably coupled to said cryptographic module; and wherein said communications module comprises a predetermined one from among a plurality of interchangeable communications modules each for communicating over a different communications media.

35. The communications system of Claim 28 wherein said network communications interface comprises at least one of a wireless LAN (WLAN) communication circuit, a wireline communication circuit, and a fiber optic communication circuit.

36. The communications system of Claim 28 wherein said user network interface comprises an Ethernet interface.